

# Digital Storytelling for Transformative Global Citizenship Education

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## Abstract

This article explores how digital storytelling offers the potential to support transformative global citizenship education (TGCE) through a case study of the Bridges to Understanding program that connected middle and high school students globally using digital storytelling. Drawing on a TGCE framework, this research project probed the curriculum and digital stories using a multimodal critical discourse analysis. The findings of this study showed that digital storytelling, as integrated into the curriculum, enhanced student engagement with non-mainstream perspectives and self-reflection. However, the core elements of discussing controversial issues, analyzing systemic causes/impacts of global problems, and determining collective action responses required critical pedagogical practices beyond those embedded within the digital storytelling curriculum.

*Keywords:* global citizenship education, digital storytelling, curriculum, critical pedagogy

## Résumé

Cet article explore le potentiel de la narration numérique en tant que soutien à l'éducation transformative de la citoyenneté mondiale (ÉTCM) par moyen d'une étude de cas du programme « Bridges to Understanding » (ponts pour la compréhension), qui a été conçu pour relier mondialement des étudiants aux niveaux intermédiaires et secondaires à travers la narration numérique. Dans le cadre de l'ÉTCM, nous avons employé une analyse critique multimodale du discours afin d'analyser le curriculum et les histoires numériques. Nos résultats ont démontré que la narration électronique, tel qu'elle est intégrée au programme, a soutenu l'engagement des perspectives introspectives et non-traditionnelles. Cependant, les éléments essentiels requis pour aborder des questions controversées, l'analyse critique des causes / effets systémiques des problèmes mondiaux, ainsi que l'action collective ont demandé l'apport de pratiques pédagogiques critiques au-delà de celles intégrées au curriculum de la narration numérique.

*Mots-clés* : l'éducation à la citoyenneté mondiale, la narration numérique, le curriculum, les pratiques pédagogiques critiques

## Introduction

The educational agenda to prepare students to navigate a rapidly changing, complex, and interconnected world within an increasingly digital landscape has resulted in curricular mandates that integrate both global citizenship education and digital technology in Kindergarten to Grade 12 classrooms. Recent studies indicate that youth are using online technologies to engage in citizenship activities such as discussing global problems, planning community service activities, seeking volunteer opportunities, writing blogs about a political issue, and forwarding political videos to their social networks (Cohen, Kahne, Bowyer, Middaugh, & Rogowski, 2012; Sunal, 2008; Van Hamel, 2011). Although a growing body of research points to ways that non-profit organizations and individual schools and teachers are using digital technologies for civics and citizenship learning (Banaji & Buckingham, 2010; Bennet, 2008; Bers, 2008; Merryfield, 2007; Rheingold, 2008), integration of technology and global citizenship is not yet common practice in most schools (VanFossen & Berson, 2008).

This research is an exploratory case study of the Bridges to Understanding (Bridges) digital storytelling program. By analyzing a long-running program that used digital storytelling to connect middle and high school classes for global citizenship learning, this study probed the extent to which such technology-based initiatives could support a transformative approach to global citizenship education. The following research questions framed our project:

1. What is the Bridges digital storytelling curriculum's conception of global citizenship education?
2. In the Bridges program, to what extent does the process of digital storytelling (from conception to creation to dissemination) support transformative global citizenship education practices?
3. Based on our analysis of the Bridges program, what are the challenges and implications for the application of digital storytelling for transformative global citizenship education?

Since 2000 there has been substantial growth in scholarly literature on global citizenship education (Parmenter, 2011). Conceptions of global citizenship education, however, remain varied and contested (Davies, 2006; Davies, Evans, & Reid, 2005; Marshall, 2011; Myers, 2010; Pike, 2008; Reimer & McLean, 2009; Shultz, 2007). There is a

general consensus among these authors that global citizenship education equips learners with the knowledge, skills, and values to navigate and live together in an increasingly interdependent world and to work collectively toward solutions to the planet's pressing problems such as human rights violations, global poverty, and environmental degradation (Abdi & Shultz, 2008; Davies, 2006; Hicks & Holden, 2007; Marshall, 2011; Schattle, 2008). In their review of the literature, Mundy, Manion, Masemann, and Haggerty (2007) identified six main dispositions common to most definitions of global citizenship education: (1) a view of human life as shaped by a history of global interdependence; (2) a commitment to the idea of basic human rights and global social justice; (3) a commitment to the value of cultural diversity and intercultural understanding; (4) a belief in the efficacy of individual action; (5) a commitment to child-centred pedagogy; and, (6) environmental awareness and commitment to ecological sustainability (p. 9). While these six tenets provide a starting point for defining global citizenship education, recent research on classroom practices of global citizenship education point to the need for a more critical framework.

An emerging body of literature has raised concerns that global education practices tend to emphasize an awareness of “distant others,” thus reinforcing a “them/us” mentality at the expense of linking local and global challenges and engaging students in critical analysis of social justice issues (Andreotti, 2006; Jefferess, 2012; Mundy et al., 2007; Taylor, 2012). As Mundy et al. (2007) noted in their study, the lack of actionable dimensions of global problems (beyond fundraising), stemming from a banal treatment of controversial issues, was evident in both the formal curricula and classroom practices across Canada. Similarly, a study in the United Kingdom that investigated primary and middle school students' views of global citizenship reported that student perceptions might, in fact, perpetuate cultural stereotypes unless issues of controversy, identity, and interdependence are critically examined (Niens & Reilly, 2012). In a similar vein, Rapoport's (2013) study with teachers in the United States observed that teachers' underlying classroom practices and curricular materials revealed that “[Americans] should cherish our democracy and promote it elsewhere so that the rest of the world can follow our example” (p. 418). Finally, Taylor's (2012) research with pre-service teachers in a social justice course noted that teacher candidates tend to view global problems as belonging to “others” and resist examining their own implication in perpetuating injustices.

## **Towards a Framework for Transformative Global Citizenship Education**

Studies in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom have demonstrated that teachers' practices reflect a strong blend of transmission and transactional tendencies that highlight knowledge acquisition and inquiry skills, while transformative practices that emphasize understandings of identity, diversity, and skills of social critique and improvement are less evident (Banks, 2008; Evans, 2006; Osler, 2011; Rapoport, 2013). Andreotti (2006) criticizes current practices that promote global problems as "third world" problems for which those in the "first world" have the power to create change. Instead, she advocates for critical and reflexive practices that challenge students to critique relations of power (e.g., who is intervening on whose behalf?), analyze the relationship among multiple viewpoints to understand the origins of their assumptions, and consider how we are all implicated in creating and solving global problems.

This study is informed by research that argues for critical or transformative global citizenship education to promote vigorous and critical analysis of conflict, social injustice, multiple perspectives, and alternative outcomes for teaching complicated global issues (Banks, 2008; Hébert & Abdi, 2013; Richardson & Abbott, 2009; Shultz, 2007).

Drawing on critical pedagogy (Freire, 1972; Giroux, 1980, 2003), a social justice orientation to citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), and a critical literacies approach to global citizenship (Andreotti, 2006), Johnson and Morris (2010) offer a useful framework for critical citizenship education. In particular, Johnson and Morris's model emphasizes citizenship knowledge, skills, and values along four dimensions: politics/ideology, social/collective, self/subjective, and praxis/engagement (see Table 1 for a description of the dimensions). For this study, we adapted Johnson and Morris's (2010) model for global citizenship education by adding Mundy et al.'s (2007) dispositions for global education to produce a working framework for transformative global citizenship education (TGCE) as shown in Table 1. We use the term "transformative" rather than "critical" to highlight the transformative and actionable dimensions of critical pedagogy. Central to transformative pedagogy is Freire's (1972) concept of praxis. That is, critical analysis and reflection are tied to personal transformation and collective action to challenge the status quo.

**Table 1.** Framework for Transformative Global Citizenship Education

Politics (Ideology)	Social (Collective)	Self (Subjectivity)	Praxis (Engagement)
Knowledge and understanding of histories, societies, systems, oppressions and injustices, power structures, and <i>history of global interdependence</i> ; skills of critical and structural social analysis; capacity to politicize notions of culture, knowledge, and power; capacity to investigate deeper causalities; <i>commitment to the idea of basic human rights, social justice, and environmental sustainability</i> ; acts against injustice and oppression	Knowledge of interconnections between culture, power, and transformation; non-mainstream writings and ideas in addition to dominant discourses; skills in dialogue, cooperation and interaction; skills in critical interpretation of others' viewpoints; capacity to think holistically; <i>commitment to the value of cultural diversity and intercultural understanding</i> ; willingness to learn with others	Knowledge of own position, cultures, and context; sense of identity; capacity to reflect critically on one's own [assumptions] and status within communities and society; independent critical thinking; speaking with one's own voice; concern for social justice and consideration of self-worth; critical perspective; autonomous; <i>belief in the efficacy of individual action</i> ; <i>commitment to student-centred pedagogy</i>	Knowledge of how collectively to effect systemic change; how knowledge itself is power; how behaviour influences society and injustice; skills of critical thinking and active participation; skills in acting collectively to challenge the status quo; ability to imagine a better world; informed, responsible, and ethical action and reflection; commitment and motivation to change society; responsibility for decisions and actions

Sources: Johnson and Morris' (2010) framework for critical citizenship education (p. 88) and, text in italics, Mundy et al.'s (2007) main dispositions of global education (p. 9).

## Digital Storytelling in Education

Although there is emerging scholarship on the innovative ways teachers are using digital technologies to advance the goals of global citizenship education (Barnatt, Winter, Norman, Baker, & Wieczorek, 2014; Gaudelli, 2006; Kirkwood, Shulsky, & Willis, 2014; Lee & Friedman, 2009; Merryfield, 2007), such practices have yet to become mainstream in K–12 classrooms (Evans, 2006; VanFossen & Berson, 2008). Digital storytelling is evolving as a potentially powerful innovation to support the aims of global citizenship education while meeting the demands of a digitally immersed student population. Creating digital narratives offers an opportunity for students to learn through technology (Buckingham, 2007) by producing digital media that can be shared both locally and globally.

Digital storytelling leads participants through a process of sharing lived experiences in a story circle that results in a two- to five-minute digital story blending personal narratives with multimedia content, including voice-overs, digital photos, video clips, music, and computer-generated text (Lambert, 2013). The multimodal affordances of digital storytelling can allow students to express lived experiences in poignant and dynamic ways by juxtaposing layers of multimedia content to convey meanings that may not surface within a traditional linear print-based text (Brushwood Rose, 2009).

As an educational tool, digital storytelling has been used widely across the curriculum (Di Blas & Paolini, 2013; Ohler 2013; Robin, 2008; Sadik, 2008). While digital storytelling has its roots in social justice work (Lambert, 2013) there is a paucity of literature explicitly connecting digital storytelling with classroom practices of global citizenship. Recent studies, however, indicate that digital storytelling can support environmental education (Kordaki & Agelidou, 2010) and teaching from a human rights and social justice perspective (Gubrium & Scott, 2010)—core tenets of global citizenship education (Mundy et al., 2007). Moreover, research with youth around the world has shown that the process of creating and sharing digital stories facilitates critical reflection, promotes personal transformation, and serves as a tool for political organizing and social activism (Brushwood Rose, 2009; Gubrium & Scott, 2010; Hull & Katz, 2006; Lambert, 2013; Reed & Hill, 2010). For example, studies with youth of “visible minority” report that creating digital stories supports them in critiquing and rewriting dominant narratives about themselves and their communities and connects them with broad social issues of power, privilege, and identity (Alrutzy, 2013; Rolón-Dow, 2011; Weber & Mitchell, 2008). This growing body of research suggests that the participatory, artistic, and reflexive process of digital storytelling has the potential to support teaching from a global perspective. Our study contributes to this growing area of research.

## **The Case Study: Bridges to Understanding Digital Storytelling Program**

This article is a case study of the Bridges to Understanding digital storytelling program using a document analysis. Founded in 2000, the Seattle-based non-profit organization connected middle and high school students worldwide through online collaboration and

digital storytelling. The organization recently dissolved, but the program is being adopted by Teachers Without Borders, another non-profit organization, for use in peace education initiatives (Teachers Without Borders, 2012). As one of a limited number of digital storytelling programs that claim to promote cross-cultural understandings and global citizenship, an in-depth and detailed analysis of this case provides important understandings (Creswell, 2013) about digital storytelling for global citizenship. At the time of the study, the Bridges website and Wikispace were active and provided a range of documents for analysis (both sites are now inactive).

To investigate the extent to which the process of digital storytelling supports transformative global citizenship education, we analyzed the *Climate Change Curriculum* (Bridges to Understanding [Bridges]. 2007) and two student-created digital stories. Because we were interested in understanding how students interpreted the processes described in the curriculum document, we purposely selected digital stories that reflected themes of environmental awareness. To compare different perspectives on a similar issue, we chose two digital stories from different countries: *Garbages* (Bridges, 2010a) by students in India, and *Your Carbon Footprint* (Bridges, 2010b) by students in the United States. The *Climate Change Curriculum* (Bridges, 2007) was published one year after the release of Al Gore's documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*, which is one of the main resources referred to in the curriculum for learning about climate change. The Bridges curriculum followed on the footsteps of Seattle's launch of their *Climate Action Plan* (Office of Sustainability and Environment, 2006). Around the same time, Washington State released its *Environmental and Sustainability Education Learning Standards* (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2009). In alignment with the goals of the state's Department of Education, the first aim of the Bridges curriculum, as reported in an online newsletter, was to "engage students in timely curricular issues while teaching academic skills" (Tuke, 2007).

To gain an understanding of the dimensions of TGCE promoted by the Bridges (2007) *Climate Change Curriculum*, we located the curriculum document within the framework for TGCE (see Table 1). Moving iteratively between the Bridges curriculum and the framework, we recorded all salient references to TGCE and sorted them into the four dimensions of the model: politics (ideology), social (collective), self (subjectivity), and praxis (engagement). We then calculated the percentage of references in each of the four dimensions relative to the total number of references extracted from the Bridges



curriculum. We further sorted the references to TGCE into subcategories of *content* and *process* for each of the four dimensions of the framework (see Figure 1). By calculating the percentage of references for each of the subcategories, we were able to compare the level of “criticality” between the *content* (e.g., stated objectives and background information) and the *process* (e.g., activities and discussion questions intended for students). Our analysis of the Bridges curriculum indicated a lack of attention to the dimension of politics/ideology. When we sorted the data across the four dimensions into subcategories of content and process, the results profiled almost equal priority to each of the four dimensions of the framework, whereas the process references showed greater variance among the four dimensions.

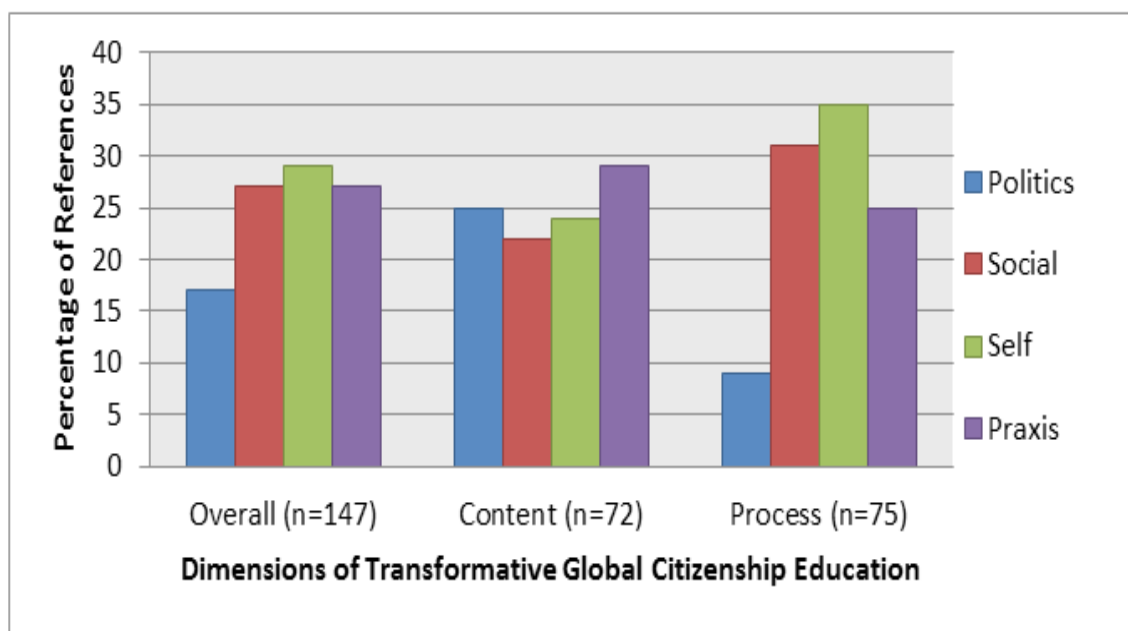


Figure 1. Percentage of references to TGCE in the Bridges (2007) *Climate Change Curriculum* across the four dimensions of the TGCE framework.

A second component of the study analyzed the *Climate Change Curriculum* and the two digital stories using a multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) framework drawn from a toolkit developed by Machin and Mayr (2012). Based on this toolkit, we formulated a list of questions to guide our analysis of the curriculum and videos. Sample questions included, “What ideas and values do the text/images connote?” “What terms are included/excluded and what difference does this make?” “What words are used to represent people as acting or passive?” “To what extent are people depicted as having

agency?” “To what extent are visual representations of agency the same as or different from the linguistic representations?” Central to MCDA is the understanding of how words and images intersect to create meaning and whether those meanings serve to maintain ideologies and power relations or challenge them. We were particularly interested in knowing whether the videos and the process of digital storytelling, as described in the Bridges curriculum document, perpetuated, or countered the “them” versus “us” view of global citizenship; the degree to which students were invited to engage in critical analysis of global issues within the curriculum; and the extent to which this perspective was expressed in their stories. The student narratives in the digital stories were transcribed and analyzed in relation to the accompanying images in the video.

### **Bridges’ Climate Change Curriculum**

The *Climate Change Curriculum* (Bridges, 2007) guides students through a three-phase collaborative, inquiry-based learning experience with a partner class in a different country. Each phase of the project consists of three lesson plans, journal reflection prompts, and activities for shared learning with a partner class through blogs and online discussions. The digital storytelling process is embedded into each phase of the curriculum. Students work in groups to research and create a collaborative digital story about a local issue related to climate change that matters to them. An important part of the project was to develop a class action plan and to include the action plan in the video.

Figure 2 shows a breakdown of the percentage of *content* and *process* references for each of the four dimensions of the TGCE framework. The most striking discrepancy between content and process is found within the dimension of politics (ideology).

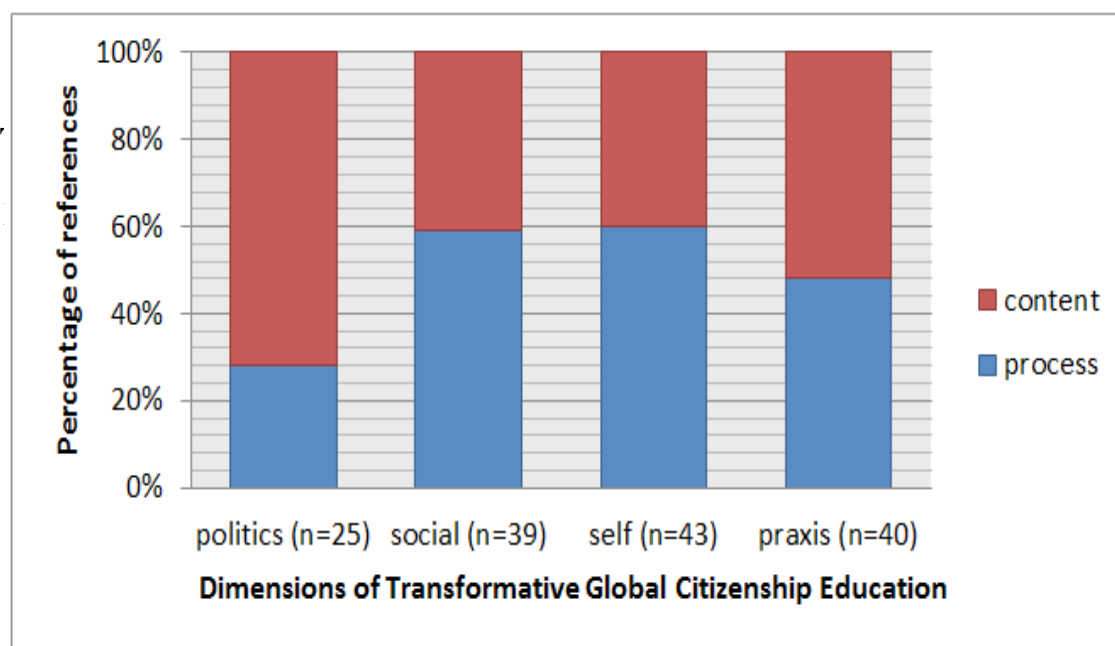


Figure 2. Percentage of process and content references in Bridges (2007) *Climate Change Curriculum* within each dimension of the TGCE framework.

We can explain the difference between the politics/ideology and the other dimensions through our analysis of the lessons that dealt with climate change. The following set of “big questions” are repeated five times throughout the curriculum document: “How does climate change affect the earth and its communities?” “What human practices affect climate change?” “Who are the stakeholders and what must we agree on?” Although these questions have the potential to engage students in a deep analysis of the root causes and effects of climate change and to identify who is implicit in the problem (Andreotti, 2006), the section of the curriculum that deals with climate change provides only one lesson on measuring and comparing carbon footprints. Equally problematic, in the guide, teachers are provided with a list of “possible” topics to explore further and are given the following instructions:

Explore the issues as in-depth as you like, or simply use the slideshow to cover the topics [emphasis added]. If you want to have students examine how they use resources at home give them the “What is my Carbon Footprint” handout for

homework. If you decide to do this, you will want to make space for the rich discussion that is likely to ensue. (Bridges, 2007, p. 18)

Unfortunately, we were unable to locate a copy of the slideshow for our analysis. Nonetheless, we assert that by suggesting that teachers “simply use the slideshow to cover all the topics” minimizes the complexities of the issue and reinforces the slideshow (possibly created by Western teachers) as the authority on climate change. The use of the word “if” in the last sentence implies that creating a space for rich discussion is an option rather than a priority. While the document provides a list of links to websites containing additional resources, this list is located at the back of the document and contains sites from only the United States and England. Given that Bridges is an international program, the weight given to resources produced in Western countries (e.g., Al Gore’s *An Inconvenient Truth*) privileges European/Western knowledge over other forms of knowledge and perpetuates the silencing of locally and culturally grounded perspectives (Andreotti, 2006; Parmenter, 2011; Richardson & Abbott, 2009).

Equally problematic in the Bridges (2007) curriculum, topics such as examining “major historical events that have caused one’s culture to develop different ways of consuming resources” (p. 20), and connecting climate change to issues of poverty and development are only suggested as lesson extensions or topics for further research, not as lessons. Although the inquiry-based approach described in the Bridges curriculum leaves room for teachers to select topics that are of interest to their students, this approach could also result in a superficial exploration of climate change, particularly among teachers who lack the confidence to address more contentious issues in the classroom (Mundy et al., 2007; Reimer & McLean, 2009). Given that students have different learning styles and varying levels of abilities, we cannot assume that all students will raise complex issues or grapple with them on their own during independent or group research. Overall, the primary activity in the lesson plan is focused narrowly on the student’s personal carbon output, at the expense of more intense political debates on social justice, issues of systemic inequality, poverty, and “development.”

A major strength of the curriculum (Bridges, 2007) is the set of journal reflection questions provided at the end of each lesson; these questions account for most of the references in the politics dimension of the TGCE framework. Of note, these journal prompts and online discussion activities offered students multiple opportunities to reflect

on their own position, context, values, and culture, and to engage in critical analysis of their complicity (Andreotti, 2006) in contributing to climate change. Students were asked to imagine what it would look/feel like to make personal changes to reduce their carbon footprint and to consider how much control they have to do so. They were also asked to examine the impact of climate change in their community and to photograph ways that people were saving energy and caring for their natural environment. One reflection question asked students to discuss why their class's carbon footprint was larger/smaller than that of their partner class, and to consider how their own perspectives changed as a result of learning from their partner class. These reflection prompts encouraged students to think about the histories and systems (Johnson & Morris, 2010) that impact climate change and how they and their partner class are interconnected through this global problem.

## **The Process of Digital Storytelling in the Bridges Curriculum**

The process of digital storytelling as described in the Bridges curriculum (2007) differs from the process developed by the original co-founders of the digital storytelling movement (Lambert, 2013) in one significant way. Traditionally, digital storytelling participants shared their narrative drafts in a story circle for feedback by peers before composing their individual digital stories (Lambert, 2013). In the Bridges program, however, students worked in groups to negotiate and reach a consensus on a research topic for their collaborative narrative on an issue that affected them and their community. Working in groups to create a collaborative digital story invites students to negotiate how to collectively represent themselves, their issue, and their community (Alrutz, 2013). The negotiation of different views is an important aspect of TGCE (Johnson & Morris, 2010). Students also negotiated the roles they wanted to play within their groups. From photographer to narrator to editor, the curriculum suggested roles to engage students in meaningful and cooperative work. As a case in point, the writers were responsible for facilitating group discussions to develop the storyline, draft the storyboard, and compose the final script; this process aligns more with the one developed by Ohler (2013) for K–12 classrooms; notably, the videos reflect the same digital story format as described by Lambert (2013).

The online exchanges with a partner class from a different country allowed students to engage with different views and realities, and to draw on non-mainstream knowledge about climate change. This approach represents crucial elements of the social dimension of transformative global citizenship education (Johnson & Morris, 2010). Students had the opportunity to develop skills in dialogue and to work together to solve problems related to the project. Throughout the entire process, they were encouraged to post photos and messages about what they were learning and creating. Furthermore, students were encouraged to use what they had learned from their partner class to inform their narratives. The combination of in-class group work and online global collaboration provided an opportunity for students to experience and navigate the complexities of group interdependence. Having a local perspective of group dynamics and interdependence can also prepare students to discuss broader issues of global interdependence (Turay & English, 2008). Educators can take advantage of this group negotiation process to call attention to the diversity of voices within the group and call into question the idea of a uniform “us” or “them” (Andreotti, 2006).

An important element in the Bridges (2007) curriculum and digital storytelling process was the priority placed on taking action. The question, “How is climate change an opportunity for us?” appeared 12 times in the 36-page document, usually followed by the question, “What can/will we do about it?” The journal reflections prompted students to consider what mattered to them about climate change and what immediate steps they could take to make a difference beyond talking about climate change. Integral to each phase of the curriculum were suggestions for action that included contacting a journalist to document the class project, implementing changes at home and school, sending letters to government officials, and screening their digital stories for the community to advocate for change. A core component of the digital storytelling process was for each group to develop and implement an action plan and include it in their narrative. Further study would be required to assess the long-term impact of project-based action plans in transforming the students as well as the community. However, the process of composing personal narratives can open up spaces for students to re-create their identities, to construct and re-construct agentive selves, and to script themselves as capable actors in creating alternative futures (Hull & Katz, 2006).

## **Digital Stories from India and the United States**

In analyzing the digital stories we were cognizant of the partiality of narratives, that the stories were shaped and reshaped throughout the process of their production (Brushwood Rose & Granger, 2013), and that the video “has to be analyzed as a collaboratively created aesthetic piece that may suggest something of [the student’s] life, but it cannot be taken as a transparent or full representation of [that] life” (Gallagher, Wessels, & Nteloglou, 2013, p. 184).

### ***Garbages (Bridges: India)***

*Garbages* (Bridges, 2010a) was created by a group of middle-school students at the Tibetan Children’s Village (TCV) in Dharamsala, India. The TCV is a residential school for children who are Tibetan refugees or whose parents came to India as Tibetan refugees. Founded in 1960 by Tsering Dolma Takla and her younger brother, the Dalai Lama, the school is a non-profit organization currently serving 1,750 students. The school’s mission is to ensure that students “receive a sound education, a firm [Tibetan] cultural identity and become self-reliant and contributing members of the Tibetan community and the world at large” (Tibetan Children’s Village, n.d., Mission section). The narrator of the story is 13-year-old Tenzin Wangchuk, but three other students are also credited with the video’s production.

The students’ manipulation of multiple modalities to strengthen their narrative is an important feature of this story. The opening image portrays a calm, clean, and spacious environment surrounded by trees and sky complementing the narration, “In the 1960s, when Tibetans first came to Dharamsala, there were only small tea stalls” (Bridges, 2010, 0:05). The text and image work together to create a sense of simple living in the past. In the next frame, the photo of an old man appears in black and white and then becomes infused with colour, creating a flow of moving from the past into the present with the narration, “An old man told me that Dharamsala used to be a green jungle. At that time, people used cloth and animal skin containers instead of plastic bags and bottles” (Bridges, 2010, 0:12). The slow panning of the camera from left to right in a subsequent frame reveals a panoramic view of mountains, trees, and sky and is contrasted by a quick transition to an image of buildings crammed together—the past is equated with “beautiful

and clean” while the present is associated with development and garbage: “Dharamsala has always been my home. I read that Dharamsala used to be a beautifully clean place. Now, Dharamsala is developed with hotels and restaurants, shops and tourism” (Bridges, 2010, 0:49). Up to this point, the narrator attributes the problem of garbage pollution to the carelessness of the local population, but in the above narration he links the local to the global, a key component of global citizenship education (Mundy et al., 2007) by raising the issue of development and tourism.

To some extent Tenzin engages in social critique, a core element of transformative global citizenship education (Johnson & Morris, 2010), by linking the problem of garbage pollution to careless individual behaviour resulting from a cultural shift from traditional values and ways of life toward modernity and economic development. In another image, Tenzin raises issues of human rights when he sees women at the recycling hall crushing plastic bottles with their feet and another woman wearing a surgical mask but no gloves to bundle cardboard. He observes that the women are working in very bad conditions but does not raise questions about who is responsible and what are possible solutions. After visiting the government welfare officer (responsible for garbage/recycling management), the Environmental Education Centre coordinator (responsible for raising awareness) and the Green Shop owners (who sell recycled paper and water to refill customers’ bottles), Tenzin reports that everyone is working very hard to manage the garbage problem, and he shows an awareness that collective action on the part of the community is needed to solve the problem. Despite a weak emphasis on the political dimension of TGCE in the Bridges curriculum (2007), the students who produced this video showed a deepening understanding of the complexities of environmental issues, which is likely a credit to the pedagogical approaches of the teacher and Bridges staff who are credited at the end of the video.

The dimension of *self* (Johnson & Morris, 2010) is clearly reflected in this digital narrative. The narrator conveys a strong sense of his own identity and agency in this video, which are important components of transformative global citizenship (Banks, 2008). The heavy use of the pronouns *I* and *we* throughout the narration, combined with images of students leading the garbage and recycling program at their school demonstrates agency and commitment to creating change in their community. The image at the end of the video of two illuminated candles amongst a larger group of unlit candles can be interpreted to symbolize the small group of students who are committed to igniting change in their



community. Through their narrative, the students crafted agentive selves and imagined themselves as future leaders in their community (Hull & Katz, 2006).

### ***Your Carbon Footprint (Bridges: USA)***

The second video that we analyzed was created by middle-school students at Salmon Bay School, an alternative K–8 school, in Seattle, Washington. The vision of the school is to “provide all students with a physically and emotionally safe space to engage in challenging, integrated and experiential learning to prepare them to become resourceful and responsible citizens in an ever-changing, diverse world” (Salmon Bay K–8 Staff Handbook, 2013/2014). The middle school program promotes an additional focus on social justice and global citizenship. The video is narrated by Will, an eighth grader, and offers viewers a glimpse of his learning journey from his being unaware of climate change and global warming to taking individual action.

In this video, Will politicizes aspects of American culture, specifically relating material possessions, such as big vehicles (and the lack of taxation on them), to climate change. He introduces local to global connections when he states, “We saw some movies that some British kids had made after Hurricane Katrina and this other hurricane hit Guatemala” (Bridges, 2010b, 1:00). Following this narration we see an image of a newspaper featuring a raging forest fire with the partial headline “...terrorize California” (Bridges, 2010b, 1:12). In this image, Will offers insights into his understanding that climate change impacts both his own country and other countries as well. At the end of the video, Will suggests several ways that the government can reduce the country’s carbon footprint: tax people who own big vehicles, give tax breaks to farmers, and offer grants to those developing renewable resources. However, he does not question what the various stakeholders would have to agree on for such changes to pass (one of the objectives of the curriculum).

Negotiating diverse viewpoints, a main element of TGCE, is not apparent in this video. The video suggests that Will relied mostly on the movie *An Inconvenient Truth*, newspaper articles, and videos that the “British kids” made – all produced in Western countries – to inform his narrative. This approach supports Rye’s (2013) findings that although students can access information about a large part of their world through the Internet (and in Will’s case he had direct access to a partner class), they tend to rely on

sources of information produced by their own countries. This insight points to a need for educators to take seriously the use of both non-mainstream and mainstream knowledge to engage students in grappling with multiple viewpoints.

The narration captures Will's journey toward taking personal responsibility (Wesheimer & Kahne, 2004) for reducing his carbon footprint. It is not possible to determine from the narratives or the images the extent to which Will is committed to changing his own consumerist attitudes and behaviours. In *Garbages*, Tenzin Wangchuk shows a personal commitment to taking action. In *Your Carbon Footprint*, Will shares that he has asked his parents how they can reduce their family carbon output, but doesn't share what actions they took, beyond trying to sell their van. He does not make an overt commitment to taking action and instead, charges the audience with "Good leaders are like coaches. They guide us and inspire us. You are our leaders [Will is pointing his finger at the audience]. We need to make changes. Please be bold" (Bridges, 2010b, 3:14). Will's call to action combined with his suggestions for change (e.g., buy less junk, turn off the lights, drive smaller cars, etc.) presumes an audience of privilege which may reproduce narratives of benevolence (Andreotti, 2006; Jefferess, 2012) in which those of "us" who are in positions of privilege have the power to create change for everyone else and thus, "our privilege and the social conditions of that privilege remain invisible and continue to be reinforced" (Jefferess, 2012, p. 40).

## Implications

Some scholars have argued that digital storytelling, as a form of participatory media, can transform both the individual through its process and the community through its product (Lambert, 2013; Reyes, 2012). Based on our analysis of the Bridges to Understanding program, we suggest that digital storytelling offers innovative opportunities to support transformative global citizenship education. However, this study also raised a number of concerns for educators seeking meaningful and creative ways to infuse both critical global citizenship and digital technologies across the curriculum.

First, one of the strengths of the Bridges program is its use of a virtual platform for interacting and learning alongside a partner class from another part of the world. This level of engagement provides opportunities for students to grapple critically with multiple

viewpoints about global issues and to collaborate to solve problems related to video production. Equally important, online discussion forums can engage students in learning with non-mainstream voices (Barnatt et al., 2014). However, as Hoofd (as cited in Andreotti & Pashby, 2013) cautions, “democratic” online forums, where participants are assumed to be on equal footing, actually advantages those who have the ability to communicate and convince, and the best tools to manipulate technology to steer the discussions. While the Bridges (2007) curriculum provided a set of tips for international communication and ideas for online dialogue (clearly supporting the program’s emphasis on cross-cultural communication), the document did not provide guidelines to support teachers in facilitating democratic interactions among students from different racial, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Without facilitation to increase equal-status and positive interactions, stereotyping suggests, “students from both privileged and marginalized groups are likely to respond in ways that reinforce the advantage of the higher status group” (Banks, 2008, p. 136). Moreover, while the curriculum document emphasized learning from both non-mainstream sources of information (i.e., partner class) as well as dominant sources (e.g., books and media) at no point in the lessons were students explicitly asked to reflect on differences/similarities between what they were learning from their global peers and popular media. Consequently, neither video in this study showed direct evidence of this level of engagement. Grappling with diverse and conflicting viewpoints is a crucial element of transformative global citizenship education (Andreotti, 2006; Pike, 2008; Banks, 2008) that needs to be more purposefully addressed in global citizenship curriculum.

Second, while the Bridges’ curriculum lacked a strong focus on the politics/ideology dimension of TGCE, the digital narratives themselves could be used to counter the stereotypes that students have of distant places and people portrayed in mass media (Niens & Reilly, 2012). The video *Garbages* (Bridges, 2010a), despite its title, shows panoramic views of mountains and lush forests that contrast the images of slums often associated with India in the media. It is also a positive example of youth in lower-economic countries actively participating to create change in their community – an example of change happening from the inside out (Andreotti, 2006). As Rolon-Dow (2011) noted in regards to digital storytelling as a tool to explore race and racism, the tensions and contradictions that emerge in digital narratives can be used as starting points for further dialogue and not the end result. In viewing digital stories, educators should teach students to resist interpreting one story as representative of an entire culture or place; they should

be cautious against literal readings of narratives as a complete representation of the storyteller's life (Gallagher et al., 2013). Given that digital technologies, such as video production, allow students to play with various identities, to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct their identities (Buckingham, 2007; Weber & Mitchell, 2008), the end product may reflect several versions of the original narrative (Brushwood Rose & Granger, 2013). Andreotti and Pashby (2013) assert that technology can both reproduce dominant systemic practices *and* create spaces for activism and challenging the status quo. An important part of developing critical digital media literacies is to deconstruct and question dominant practices in student-created digital stories as well as other forms of digital media. In using digital stories as learning resources, it is crucial that educators are equipped to facilitate dialogue around issues of controversy and dissent, which leads us to another implication of our study.

A third important finding of our study is that teachers require professional development that explicitly models ways to engage students in discussing, debating, critiquing, and questioning global issues that are contentious in nature (Appleyard & McLean, 2011), especially where the written curriculum is lacking in those areas. As Appleyard and McLean (2011) point out, healthy and effective classroom debates and discussions need to be guided by clear parameters. These directives were not provided in the Bridges (2007) *Climate Change Curriculum* and as a result, students' digital stories reflected a summary of their learning rather than a more critical analysis of systemic causes of environmental issues based on synthesizing multiple sources of information, including non-mainstream sources. For instance, the curriculum should include a critical viewing of Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* (perhaps in relation to information produced in non-Western countries), rather than relying on it as the main source for learning about climate change.

Finally, our analysis of the Bridges (2007) *Climate Change Curriculum* and student digital stories revealed a strong focus on students taking action to improve their communities. The actions taken in the two videos aligned with Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) *personally responsible* citizen, as exemplified in the video by Will, who expressed wanting to reduce his carbon footprint, and *participatory* citizen, as portrayed by Tenzin Wangchuk who helped to organize and run the recycling program at his school. Although the Bridges curriculum stressed taking action for change, the learning activities did not push students to connect an understanding of the systemic causes of environmental

problems to collective actions that would lead to systemic change, consistent with the characteristics of a *social-justice* citizen (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

## Conclusion

Our analysis of the Bridges to Understanding program indicates that both the process and product of digital storytelling can support a transformative approach to global citizenship education, particularly in the dimensions of self (subjective) and social (collective). The degree to which digital storytelling engages students in a social critique of global problems and promotes collective action for change will depend on the pedagogical approaches embedded in the curriculum and adopted by educators. Digital technologies such as digital storytelling and global online collaborations have the potential to engage students worldwide in learning about the local contexts that are affected by and contribute to broader global problems, such as climate change. While these forms of technology present opportunities to perpetuate exclusions and dominant views such as cultural stereotypes, digital technologies and digital storytelling specifically can also offer counter-narratives to negative ideas and perspectives. The aim of this study was to continue the complex work of “wrestling with concepts, contexts, choices and implications that we face every day as teachers and learners working toward deeper and more ethical ways of relating to others and to the world...[this] is at the core of relevant and ethical global citizenship education” (Andreotti & Pashby, 2013, p. 435).

While there is a burgeoning canon of literature on digital storytelling in educational research, few studies have examined digital storytelling explicitly through the lens of transformative global citizenship education. Moreover, although digital storytelling has been applied to a variety of curricular subjects, many of these studies have not examined students’ digital stories in relation to the curriculum documents that are intended to guide teachers through the process of using digital storytelling for global citizenship education. One of the limitations of this study is that we cannot make claims about the teachers’ and Bridges facilitators’ approach to teaching. We also lack an understanding of what students took away from viewing one another’s videos. Nonetheless, as digital storytelling continues to grow in popularity, the findings of this study have implications for both future research and curriculum development aimed at integrating digital storytelling and global citizenship education.

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